

ASSOCIAZIONE PER L'INTESA INTELLETTUALE  
FRA I PAESI ALLEATI ED AMICI

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# THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES

AND

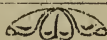
# THEIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS

**KENNETH McKENZIE, Ph. D. (Harvard)**

PROFESSOR OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

DIRECTOR (1918-1919) OF THE ITALIAN BRANCH

OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY UNION IN EUROPE

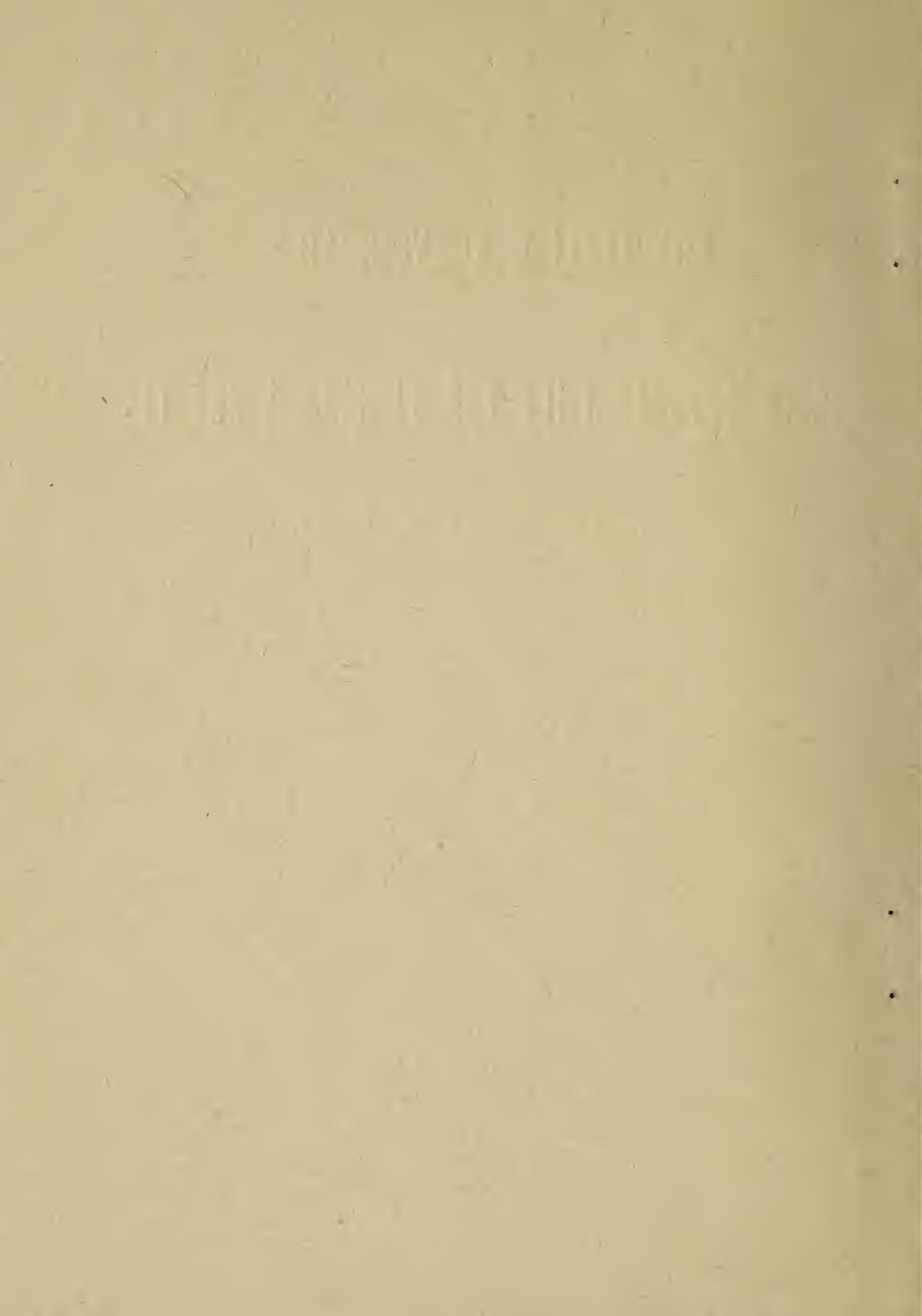


ROMA

TIPOGRAFIA NAZIONALE BERTERO

Via Umbria, 27

1919



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Roma — R. Università

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Dott. EMILIO RE - Prof. VITTORIO ROSSI  
On. Prof. ANDREA TORRE

### **The Universities of Italy: their history.**

The Universities of Italy have had a long and glorious history. They have trained many of the intellectual leaders of the modern world, and have had in their Faculties men eminent in all lines of scientific and literary activity. During the last half-century in particular, their facilities for instruction and research have been greatly developed, and the range of subjects taught has been extended; but in all periods of their history they were an important factor in the life of Europe. By the time America was discovered, several of the Italian Universities were already older than Harvard or Yale is today.

The University of Bologna, reputed to be the oldest in Europe, began its existence as a school for the study of law in the second half of the eleventh century, the exact date being uncertain. Since that time its activity has been uninterrupted, and its reputation has been particularly great in the study of law. About the same time the school of medicine at Salerno was established. In 1224 the Emperor Frederick II founded the University of Naples, as a rival to Bologna in the study of law and theology; in 1252 this institution was moved to Salerno and joined to the medical school, but after a few years the entire University was transferred to Naples. There it flourished intermittently, becoming after the Union of Italy one of the most important in the Kingdom. At Parma a school of arts is said to have existed from the eleventh century; and in the thirteenth, law and medicine were taught there. The Universities of Pisa and Modena date from the twelfth century, those of Padua, Perugia, Siena and Macerata from the thirteenth. In Rome, higher studies were cultivated in the thirteenth



century; but the University, *Studium Urbis*, was really founded in 1303 by Boniface VIII. During certain periods it flourished and had distinguished scholars on its staff; at other times it declined, or even was closed altogether. In 1748 the numerous "schools" were reduced to five faculties: Philosophy and Art; Theology; Law; Medicine; Languages. After 1870, Theology was eliminated, and the natural sciences began to be cultivated; the University developed rapidly, with a number of special schools in affiliation; only the faculties of Law and of Letters and Philosophy now occupy the building called *La Sapienza* (1660), which for two centuries housed the entire University.

### **The Universities of Italy: their Present Condition.**

Since 1870 the regular government Universities have been seventeen in number. Of these, eleven are "complete", that is to say, have the four Faculties: Letters and Philosophy; Sciences; Law; Medicine and Surgery. Some of them have additional Faculties or technical schools, such as those of Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Engineering, affiliated with them. The "incomplete" Universities lack the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, and in some cases other Faculties. In addition, there are four so-called Free Universities (*Università Libere*), which are "incomplete". The Istituto di Studi Superiori at Florence and the Accademia Scientifico-letteraria at Milan are of University grade, as are also the Politecnico of Turin and other technical schools. The "complete" Universities are those of Turin, Genoa, Pavia, Padua, Pisa, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Palermo, Messina, Catania; the "incomplete", Modena, Parma, Siena, Macerata, Cagliari, Sassari; the "free", Ferrara, Urbino, Perugia, Camerino. There are Engineering Schools at Turin (Politecnico), Milan, Padua, Bologna, Rome, Naples, Palermo.

Many of these institutions owe their existence to the fact that until the nineteenth century Italy was not united politically, but was made up of separate and often antagonistic units, some of them controlled by foreign nations. After Rome became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, the local and regional feelings still continued, and the in-

stitutions which had arisen in the separate states were perpetuated. Thus Parma and Modena, formerly independent duchies, have preserved their Universities in spite of the nearness of Milan and Pavia on the north and of Bologna on the south. The former States of the Church had, beside Rome and Bologna, a number of smaller Universities under ecclesiastical control; and these have become the Università Libere of today. On the other hand, Southern Italy, long under the rule of Spain, has no University except that of Naples. The island of Sicily has three complete Universities, while Sardinia has two incomplete Universities, lacking a Faculty of Letters.

In spite of their having been until the nineteenth century free from any sort of centralized control, the organization of the Faculties is, with very few exceptions, uniform throughout Italy so far as the leading branches of learning are concerned. Thus most Universities have a Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences; but Naples has a separate Faculty of Mathematics and one of Natural Sciences, or five Faculties instead of four. The Politecnico at Turin is entirely distinct from the University; but in other places the Engineering School (Scuola di Applicazione per gli Ingegneri) is affiliated with the University, and the first two years of the Engineering course are given by the Faculty of Sciences. Theology, once the chief study in many of the Universities, is now excluded from them all, and is taught only in the Church Schools. Ecclesiastical Law, however, is a required subject under the Faculty of Law, which also teaches Political Economy, Public Finance and Statistics. The Istituto Tecnico Superiore of Milan, like the Politecnico at Turin, has the complete five-year course in various branches of Engineering, and the Accademia Scientifico-letteraria of Milan is equivalent to the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in a University. In Turin, Genoa, Milan, Venice, Rome and Bari there are Higher Commercial Schools.

### **Primary and Secondary Schools.**

Italian education is based on a system of schools beginning with Elementary, continuing with Secondary, and

ending with Higher Institutions. The entire system is controlled by the Ministry of Education (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione), having at its head the Minister (Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione), and a Council (Consiglio Superiore). The Elementary Schools (Scuole Elementari) have a course of six years, which pupils finish between the ages of 12 and 14. After the fourth year, however, they may transfer to the Secondary Schools (Scuole Medie); these have a course of eight years, divided between the Ginnasio (five years) and the Liceo (three years), and are called Classical or Modern, according to the subjects taught. Graduating from the Liceo at about the age of eighteen, the student receives the Licenza Liceale, which admits him to the University. There are also Technical Schools of Secondary grade; the Scuola Tecnica with a course of three years, followed by the Istituto Tecnico with a course of four years; these do not give the right to enter the University, except that the Physics-Mathematics course admits to the Faculty of Sciences and to the Engineering Schools, and the Agricultural course admits to the School of Pharmacy. The course of the Ginnasio and Liceo includes Italian, Latin, History and Geography, and Mathematics throughout the eight years; the Liceo has Physics and Chemistry for three years. The Ginnasi and Licei Classici have Greek for five years, French for three, Philosophy for three, while the Ginnasi and Licei Moderni have English or German in place of Greek, four years of French, two years of Philosophy. Finally, there are Normal Schools (Scuole Normali) of Secondary grade for boys and for girls, which do not admit to the University; the girls who graduate from them are, however, admitted to the Higher Normal Schools of Rome and Florence (Istituto Superiore di Magistero Femminile).

### **Organization of the Universities.**

Higher education in Italy is controlled by a bureau of the Ministry of Education, the Direzione Generale per l'Istruzione Superiore, under a Direttore Generale. Some of the Universities have larger faculties and offer a wider range



of courses than others; but the requirements for the degrees, including the prescribed studies, are identical in all, and the standard is assumed to be the same. Credit is given in any University for work in other Universities. The Professors are appointed by royal decree, on the basis of competitive tests or of distinguished reputation. The *Professori Ordinari*, *Professori Straordinari*, and *Liberi Docenti* correspond in a general way to the Professors, Assistant Professors and Instructors in American Universities. Every Faculty has one *Professore Ordinario* in each of the "fundamental" subjects (*materie costitutive*), and only one; he gives each year one course in this subject, and sometimes a course in another subject of which the professorship may be temporarily vacant. The larger Universities, however, frequently have a number of courses in certain important subjects, such as Italian Literature, offered by *Liberi Docenti*; and professorships in various other subjects beside those regarded as fundamental. Each Faculty has a Dean or Chairman (*Preside*), and each University has a Council (*Consiglio Accademico*), presided over by a Rector (*Rettore*).

The University year extends nominally from October 16 to July 31; but the instruction begins in November or even later, and ends by June 15. Examinations are as a rule given in two periods, beginning respectively October 16 and June 16. The Universities are open to men and women, to Italians and foreigners, on the same terms.

The hours of classes and the exact topics to be treated in each course are announced at the opening of the year. The lectures do not repeat the same material year after year, so that it is frequently possible not only to hear different phases of a subject treated by different instructors, but to follow the same subject for two or three years; indeed, in some curricula this is required.

### **Registration and Fees.**

The regular University lectures are open freely to visitors; but in order to receive academic credit and become candidates for a degree, students must matriculate and pay certain fees (unless these are remitted). First it is neces-

sary to pay the matriculation fee (*tassa d'immatricolazione*; lire 75) and at least half of the first annual tuition fee (*tassa d'iscrizione*; lire 125 for the Faculties of Sciences and of Letters; lire 155 for Medicine; lire 220 for Law; and lire 165 for Engineering). The candidate then presents to the Rector a request for enrollment under one of the Faculties, stating his name and the names of his parents, birth-place, home address, and address in the city; he must send also his birth-certificate (which in the case of a foreigner should be countersigned by an Italian consul), a receipt for the fee paid, and a certificate showing the completion of the course of study in the Secondary School. This request is ordinarily presented between August 1 and November 5, but may be presented at other times. After favorable action has been taken, the candidate receives from the Secretary of the University a course-book (*libretto d'iscrizione*), in which he enters his name, and secures the signature of the instructor in each of the courses that he wishes to take. The list of courses must be approved by the Secretary. At the end of the year the instructors sign the course-book again, and the Secretary enters in it the result of the examinations. The student also has an identification card (*tessera di riconoscimento*), with a portrait (which he must furnish) attached to it. Before taking the special examinations he pays each year an examination fee (lire 20); and before taking his degree he pays fees for the final examination (*sopratassa per l'esame di laurea*; lire 50) and for the diploma (lire 100).

Those who do not wish to matriculate as candidates for a degree may register as listeners (*uditori*). In this case they are not obliged to have any specified academic preparation. They pay a tuition fee for each course taken, amounting to one fifth of the regular tuition fee. They may if they desire take the regular examinations, paying a fee of lire 5 for each one; and on request they receive a certificate of attendance and for such examinations as they have passed. Courses taken under these conditions give no credit toward an Italian degree, but the certificate is useful as an evidence of having studied in Italy.

## University Courses and Degrees.

The University courses are of four years in the case of the Faculties of Letters and Philosophy, Sciences, and Law; of six years in the case of Medicine and Surgery. These courses lead to the degree (laurea) of Doctor. The course in Engineering is of five years, the first two of which are passed under the Faculty of Sciences, the last three in the Scuola di Applicazione; or the entire five years may be passed in the Politecnico, — the degree in either case being that of Engineer (Ingegnere). In the four-year courses, each student must take twelve or more subjects, largely prescribed; and some of the subjects must be continued for two or three years. An examination (esame speciale) must be passed in each subject, and finally a general examination (esame di laurea o di diploma). The subject-matter indicated for each course is covered by the special examination in that course, even if it has not been entirely covered by the lectures. The final or general examination consists of (1) the presentation of a written dissertation, (2) an oral discussion of the dissertation, (3) an oral discussion of three theses, or propositions, selected by the candidate from subjects other than that of the dissertation, and when required, (4) practical tests. The language of instruction, of the examinations, and of the dissertation is Italian.

## Foreign Students.

Foreigners who have completed the entrance requirements of an approved University in their own country are thereby qualified to enter the Italian Universities. If they have received credit for University studies, they may without examination receive corresponding credit in an Italian University, and be admitted to advanced standing. In each case, the credentials must be approved by the University Council.

Foreigners who have received a degree from a University of approved standing, and who can prove that they have studied all the subjects required for one of the regular

degrees in Italy, are not obliged to study in residence or to take the examinations in the separate subjects, but may present themselves directly for the final examination for the degree which they desire. This does not apply, however, to the new degree mentioned below. The character of the final examination is as above indicated: written dissertation and oral discussions.

### **Requirements for the regular degrees.**

The regular degrees conferred by the several Faculties carry with them certain legal rights in connection with practising the professions; the courses leading to them are intended not only to advance science and increase the culture of the nation, but to prepare students for the professions. For this reason, the studies in each course are largely prescribed. Thus under the Faculty of Law eighteen subjects are offered, and all of them must be taken. Under the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery twenty subjects are offered, and all of them must be taken. The Faculty of Sciences confers the doctorate in Mathematics, in Physics, in Chemistry, or in Natural Sciences; in each case, the subjects to be studied are prescribed, with alternatives under certain conditions. For the degree in Engineering the subjects are prescribed, with alternatives allowing a certain amount of specialization in the latter part of the course. The Faculty of Letters and Philosophy offers a wider variety of subjects, and confers two degrees, the doctorate in Philosophy and that in Letters. Of the subjects, eighteen are fundamental (*costitutivi*), i. e., they must be offered by every Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. Other subjects are complementary (*complementari*), which vary in number and character according to the resources of each University. The degree in Philosophy requires twelve courses, eight being prescribed among the fundamental subjects, and four being chosen freely by the student among all the courses, fundamental or complementary, offered by this Faculty or (with approval) by the other Faculties. For the degree in Letters twelve courses are required; four subjects (*materie comuni*) are prescribed for all candidates (Italian, Latin,



and Greek Literatures; Philosophy); four more (*materie specifiche*) must be taken in one of three groups, according as the candidate specializes in Classical Philology, Modern Philology, or History and Geography; and four more (*materie libere*) are freely elective. Some of the prescribed subjects must be continued for three years, some for two years.

### **The new doctor's degree.**

On October 28, 1917, a new doctorate degree was established, equivalent in grade and in the amount of work required to the old four years' degrees, but not demanding their rigid selection of courses. This new degree is not professional in the sense of giving legal rights in connection with the practise of the professions in Italy, but is intended to encourage scientific attainment for the purpose of advancing knowledge and increasing the personal culture of the individual; for this reason it is sometimes referred to as a scientific degree (as opposed to professional). It was destined at first exclusively for foreigners, who would not wish to conform to the requirements of the professional curricula. In March, 1918, however, it was opened to Italians as well. Foreigners are admitted to candidacy, and are given credit for work done elsewhere, on the same basis as in the case of the other degrees. The requirements for the new degree are four years of study in residence and at least twelve courses; the courses are chosen freely by the student from those offered by one Faculty or by several Faculties. Courses in the same subject may be separately counted if taken under different instructors, or in different years under the same instructor, provided the specific matters treated are distinct; in the case of the old degrees, such courses are not counted separately. The only restriction on the choice of courses is that, not later than the third year of study, they must be approved by the Faculty, or by a special Committee of several Faculties, as sufficient for the degree in the subject selected by the student. If, however, a student has already received an academic degree from an Italian, or from an approved foreign University (for in-

stance, a Bachelor's or a higher degree in the United States), he need spend but one year in residence, taking at least three separate courses. The final examination in each case consists of (1) the presentation of a dissertation, which must be in print; (2) an oral discussion of the dissertation; (3) a discussion on the major subject of the candidate, involving the methods of research in that subject; (4) a practical test, if the subject is experimental. The fees to be paid by candidates for this special degree are those paid by listeners, which are materially less than those paid by regular candidates for the other degrees.

It results from the establishment of this new degree that students can now make up a course of study suited to their particular needs or desires, and at the same time receive academic recognition for it. The advantages are obvious in the case of foreigners wishing to prepare themselves as teachers or investigators in specific fields of knowledge; and the provisions of the law offer every opportunity for meeting individual needs. As an instance, a student wishing to take Geography as his major subject, will naturally elect under the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy the courses in Geography, in Ancient and Modern History, and, if offered, in Ethnology or Anthropology; under the Faculty of Law, Political Economy and Statistics; under the Faculty of Sciences, Geology, Botany, Zoology; the last two subjects can also be studied under the Faculty of Medicine, and the remainder of the required twelve courses can be made up by continuing some of these subjects for a second or third year, and by adding courses in Language, Literature, History of Art, etc. At the same time, subjects required for the old degree in History and Geography – Greek and Latin Literature, for instance – need not be taken. In addition to the old degree in History and Geography, it is now possible to make a new group of History and Political Science; it is possible also to make a combination of pure and applied science, by selecting courses offered by the Faculty of Sciences and by the Engineering School. In comparatively narrow fields, particularly under the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, the larger Universities offer a great variety of courses, for instance in History and in Literature. Thus

at Rome there are special "schools" of Archeology, of Oriental Languages, and of the History of Medieval and Modern Art.

### **Degrees for Foreigners.**

It is to be noted that persons who have an academic degree from a recognized foreign University, can become candidates for this new Italian degree by taking three courses in residence and presenting themselves for the final examination (which includes a printed dissertation). On the other hand, if the course of study which they pursued in attaining the foreign degree coincides with that required for one of the regular degrees in Italy, they may become candidates for the latter without taking further courses in residence, merely presenting themselves for the final examination (in which case the dissertation is not necessarily printed). It is not to be expected that very many Americans would find it advisable to go through the courses prescribed for the regular degrees. Many, however, especially those who have graduated from an American college, will certainly find it advantageous to present themselves as candidates for the new degree, arranging courses of study for a year or more, in accordance with their special needs. Many more will undoubtedly wish to take advantage of the opportunity to study in an Italian University, receive a certificate for the work done, and apply the credit so earned to obtaining a degree from a University in America.

At present no degree of higher grade than the regular laurea or the new doctorate is conferred in Italy; and from what precedes, it is obvious that the requirements for these degrees are less in amount than the requirements for the doctorate in Graduate Schools of good standing in America. It must be borne in mind, however, that for Americans the successful following of a course of University study in Italy implies residence abroad and mastery of the Italian language. Furthermore, many Italian students continue to attend the Universities after receiving the laurea, whether for private research or in order to fit themselves to enter the competitions for University appointments. It is not



uncommon for students to take a second laurea in a subject different from that of the first. Some of the advanced courses (Corsi di Perfezionamento, Scuola di Magistero) are given with special reference to the training of teachers. Since appointment and promotion depend largely on the scientific work of the candidate as shown in his research and publication, it is natural that the advanced students are men with whom it is intellectually stimulating to be associated. Many Americans, after spending one or more years in residence in an Italian University, will prefer to get the doctor's degree in America. It is evident, however, that others may profitably take the doctorate in Italy.

### **The language.**

Foreigners coming to Italy for any purpose will naturally find a knowledge of the language advantageous; in particular, those entering the University must be able to read it and to understand it when spoken. Fortunately, it is not difficult to acquire sufficient command of Italian for these purposes. Anyone coming to Italy during the summer and spending the months preceding the opening of the University year in studying the language, should be able to understand the lectures, as well as ordinary conversation. Those who have studied Italian in school or college in America will of course find their progress after reaching Italy greatly facilitated. It is expected that in the near future Summer Schools will be established in Italy, for the benefit of foreigners who wish to study the language, literature, art, history, institutions, etc., of the country; and also courses during the academic year adapted to the special needs of foreigners. As already stated, visitors are freely admitted to the lectures in the Universities, but candidates for a degree are obliged to present a dissertation written in Italian. This requirement should not deter persons otherwise qualified, since they can always obtain assistance in putting their work into suitable linguistic form.

The Italian Universities do not have dormitories, or student life as it is known in America and England. The students live where they please, and the University has no



disciplinary authority over them outside its own precincts. Attendance at the lectures is expected, but is left more or less to the discretion of the individual; the degrees being awarded on the basis of the examinations and the dissertation. The students may prepare for these in whatever way they prefer.

### **Choosing a University.**

In choosing the School or University at which they wish to study in Italy, Americans will be guided partly by the fame of the institution and of its professors, and partly by the advantages of its location. Eminent teachers and excellent facilities for study and research are found not only in the Universities of the large centres, but in some of the smaller cities as well. The professors, who are as a rule familiar with the literature of their subjects in all languages, combine technical accuracy of method with breadth of view and charm of style. They often give seminar courses in addition to the formal lectures. To serious students they are ready to give counsel and assistance. The more important Universities have libraries well supplied with technical works; while the public libraries in many cities, with collections of manuscripts and rare books which afford unlimited material for research, also make available current publications. Many of the laboratories are good; but in general the work in both pure and applied science tends to be theoretical rather than experimental. Very thorough training is given in Engineering, especially in the Politecnico. Admirable clinics are available in the larger cities for students of Medicine.

This is not the place to discriminate between the comparative merits of the Universities of Italy. An advanced student can readily ascertain where are located the men best known as authorities in any particular subject. Concise descriptions of all the Universities and other higher institutions in Italy, including libraries and learned societies, with lists of the professors and other officials, will be found in the *Annuario degli Istituti Scientifici Italiani*, compiled by Professor Silvio Pivano for the *Associazione Italiana*

*per l'Intesa Intellettuale fra i Paesi Alleati ed Amici* (Rome, 1918; price, 10 lire). The annual catalogue (Annuario) issued by each University is usually a bulky volume containing the annual report of the Rector and the formal address given at the opening of the academic year, with lists of the Faculty and students and a general description of the courses; it fails to give much of the practical information needed by a prospective student, especially a foreigner. It is hoped that the information here presented, although somewhat general in character, will be both interesting and useful, and will bring to the attention of Americans the opportunities in Italy for studying not only art, archeology and literature, but also such subjects as philology (both classical and modern), history, law, medicine, engineering, and the natural and mathematical sciences. The regulations, as has been shown, are most liberal for foreign students, and the Italian educational authorities are eager to do everything in their power to attract foreign students, especially Americans, and to facilitate their work in Italy. A recent law (January, 1919) provides for sending abroad Italian students, scholars, professors and librarians for study or for exchange of teaching positions. It is evident, then, that international intellectual relations will be developed to the mutual benefit of Italy and of the United States.

### **Special provisions 1919-1920.**

During the War, students absent from the Universities for military service were automatically kept on the rolls and given credit for residence; but it was still necessary for them to pass the examinations before receiving their diplomas. To meet this situation, special courses of three to four months duration are offered in the required subjects by all Faculties, beginning with April, 1919, and continuing until the summer of 1920. By invitation of the Minister of Education, these special courses are open to members of the American Expeditionary Forces. They offer the opportunity to obtain training in many subjects in a shorter time than under normal conditions.







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